DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 293 314 FL 017 290

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TITLE The Acid Test of Language Training in Business Education.
PUB DATE May 87
NOTE 7p.; In: Languages and Communication for World Business and the Professions. Conference Proceedings; see FL 017 281.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Business Administration Education; *Cooperative Education; English (Second Language); Field Experience Programs; Foreign Countries; French; German; Higher Education; *Interdisciplinary Approach; *International Trade; *Languages for Special Purposes; Program Descriptions; Program Design; School Business Relationship; Second Language Instruction; Study Abroad; Upper Division Colleges
IDENTIFIERS *Niels Brock School Internatl Business (Denmark)

ABSTRACT

The Niels Brock School of International Business in Denmark, an upper-division institution, offers a unique program in which students spend half of their time at the school and half in a real job in a participating export company. The participating companies are actively involved in developing program content and design, including joint student-school-company selection of topics for the required reports and thesis. The resulting degree is equivalent to a bachelor's degree, and represents proficiency in business administration and an intermediate level of proficiency in three second languages: English, German, and French. In addition to the academic and work portions of the program, students participate in two study tours, the first focusing on the European market and the second encompassing an overseas market. On these tours, pairs of students gather information on a specific market and complete a company project. A professor is available to act as a coach at the major destinations on the first tour. Program graduates have been successful in gaining employment in international trade. (MSE)

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THE ACID TEST OF LANGUAGE TRAINING

IN

BUSINESS EDUCATION

by

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Niels Brock School of International Business

Copenhagen

Denmark

Paper presented at Sixth Annual Conference on Languages and Communication for World Business and Professions

May 1987

FL017290

Degree objectives:

Niels Brock School of International Business is a business school integrating theory and practice specializing in International Business. The School was established in 1977 and is unique in its approach to education: the students spend half their time at the school, and half in a real job in a participating export company. The participating companies are actively involved in the program. Through company tours and presentation by company management the companies help tailoring the education to their needs. A very important aspect of this is the joint student-school-company selection of topics for reports and the thesis required for graduation.

The school seeks to

1. integrate theoretical and practical learning

2. speed up adaption of current theoretical concepts to practical settings.

3. provide companies with apt young employees with a base level of business skills (equivalent to the BBA).

Admission Requirements:

Students:

The education of the school is equivalent to the BBA. Applicants must have passed the Danish "Højere Handels-eksamen" (HH) equivalent to two years of US college (associate degree of business administration). Typically the students are 20-22 years old when admitted, which means that they have spent 14 years at least in school. Most have no prior practical experience.

Apart from the business background a medium level is required in three languages:

English

German

French

All three languages are compulsory.

Company involved in the program:

A substantial part of the education is the work experience as an integral part of the program.

The students are employed in an international, export company

(or import) with more than 10 employees. Also the company has to be approved by the school.

The students are employed, two at a time (job-sharing). The program is divided into blocks of appr. 5 weeks. When one student is in the company, the other is at the same time at school. At the end of each block one day is spent in the company together in order to pass on all necessary information needed for the other to continue a project. They share a full-time salary.

To give an idea of the interest for the program among applicants the latest figures show that for 80 positions there were more than 400 applicants. So it is obvious that the companies can pick the best ones for the jobs.

Academic program:

The education has a substantial academic part with a broad scope of subjects, divided into two main equally important areas

business

languages

The subjects in business are:

International Marketing
International Taxation
Management Control
Proficiency in Speech and Meetings
Sales Training
Topical Issues in Management

Two papers are written (one per year):

Paper 1: Situation analysis

Description of market structure and behavior for a certain product in a specific market.

Paper 2: Situation analysis and selecting marketing opportunities

Same as paper 1, plus
forecast, analysis of opportunities/threats, and strength/weaknesses of the business unit and discussion of objectives.

Final Thesis:

Contents:

Executive Summary
Current Marketing
Opportunity and Issue Analysis
Objectives
Marketing Strategy
Action Programs
Budgets and Controls

All the above papers plus the final thesis are closely related to the companies involved as the papers take up topics on specific markets and specific products of the companies involved.

In this way the school of international business copes with its main objective, to integrate theory and practice.

The final thesis is discussed during a 2-3 hours' session between an executive from the student's company, a professor from the school and the student. This procedure has proved how useful the final thesis is for the company involved in the program.

Languages:

As already mentioned the three languages English, German and French are part of the program. In business it is important to be able to communicate without any difficulties in the three major languages in the USA, Europe and the main part of the world. The emphasis is laid upon oral proficiency, which is important in negotiations, telephone calls, telex, sales trips etc. Written language is trained, too (such as business letters, memoranda, telex and reports).

In the program the proficiency of speaking the foreign language and communicating the language in presentation, discussion, negotiation etc. is stressed. At the same time the student is introduced into civics and business life of the foreign contry by means of topical business texts (newspapers, magazines, textbooks etc.).

Not only language is taught, but most certainly to a great extent there is an interaction between business and languages. The interaction takes place when focusing on the various areas in the world.

1. and 2. semester: German/French speaking contries.

3. semester: English speaking contries.

4. semester: Japan.

covering: Languages, culture, politics, business, trade, marketing etc.

where business and language faculty have to co-operate.

The interaction is carried out in the widest sense of the word. When the student in co-operation with his company has to work on a project, the school (theory), the company (practice) and the student have to work together on the project and in this way interact.

"The integration ladder"

In 8 steps the above interaction is carried through.

1. Company Procedure Methods
2. Paper 1
3. Study Tour 1
4. Language Course
5. Paper 2
6. Study Tour 2
7. Presentation Techniques
8. Final Thesis

The full integration described above is found with the

ACID TEST IN LANGUAGE TRAINING

during the two study tours where study tour 1 focuses on a European market and study tour 2 focuses on preferably an overseas market (the greater part the US) and the language courses. During these study tours and language courses the two students have to gather information on a specific market for their company, thus they are alone coping with the language in business negotations or interviews with foreign business managers etc. However, there will be a professor on the main destinations as a "coacher" for study tour 1. The destinations for study tour 1 are:

Paris

Munich

Frankfurt

Zürich

Vienna

The destinations for study tour 2 are:

USA

other destinations

Between the 2 and the 3 semester the students have to participate in either a German or a French language course with a duration of 6 weeks. Professional schools are used in:

France

Germany (FRG)

Austria

Also during the 6 weeks abroad a company project is carried out, this time stressing the trade language. They are all being accomodated in private homes.

The education has proved a success for the first 300 graduates. There are no unemployed graduates. Up till now they possess middle management jobs. Here are a few examples of their international careers:

In October 1986 there were 30 openings in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for jobs as commercial assistants in the Foreign Service. Among 400 applicants 7 of these jobs were given to graduates from Niels Brock School of International Business. At the moment you will find among others 2 in New York , 1 in L.A., 1 in New Orleans, 1 in Chicago, 1 in Singapore, 1 in Egypt, 1 in Brussels, 1 in Duesseldorf etc.

Other examples are:

Marketing/Sales Managers

Managing Directors of own companies

Area Managers

Managing Directors of Subsidiaries in the US and France